

**Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

8:30 a.m.

215 Bay Street, Conference Room #1, Easton, MD 21601

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Board Members Present: Judy Bixler, John Booth, Ian Fleming, Jeff Schneider, Laura Price, Kim Weller, Cassandra Vanhooser

Board Members Absent: Al Silverstein, Angela Eade, Ben Simons, Harold Klinger, Kelley Cox, Mark Salter

Visitor: Sam Shoge

Recording Secretary: Candace Harris

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the October meeting were not presented as a quorum is needed to conduct business.

III. Old Business

Economic Development Week: Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Shoge gave an update on the events of Economic Development Week.

Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism hosted the Maryland Economic Development Association fall meeting and PNC Rural Economic Development Day in Easton on October 21. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Benjamin Wu presented a proclamation declaring Economic Development Week in Maryland at the MEDA Conference on Monday. Council President Corey Pack and Easton Mayor Robert Willey also presented proclamations.

On October 22, Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Shoge also gave an update on departmental activities to the County Council. Ms. Price and Mr. Calahan presented a proclamation declaring it Economic Development Week in Talbot County.

The Talbot County Chamber of Commerce sponsored its annual Economic Development Symposium on Thursday, October 24, and Mayor Willey hosted his annual Prayer Breakfast on Friday. This was followed by a tour of Easton by a group from the Urban Land Institute. It was a very busy week, and Ms. Vanhooser felt it was a homerun because all of these events generate press coverage about the Talbot County economy and the role this department plays.

Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit: Ms. Bixler and Ms. Weller gave an overview of the Maryland Travel and Tourism summit. Ms. Bixler said that there were many great speakers. Ms. Vanhooser and Ms. Owens won the Maryland Office of Tourism Development's Market Expansion Award for the Stories of the Chesapeake's campaign titled Maryland's Tastiest Catch, which included publishing a cookbook.

Ms. Bixler met with the Secretary's staff about the Governor's budget for tourism. Tourism is the 10th largest employer in the State of Maryland. Maryland hosted 49.1 million visitors in 2018, generating \$18.1 billion in revenue. The key take away is every citizen will pay \$1,140.00 in annual taxes if it were not for Tourism.

Coffee and Conservation Event at Waterfowl Festival: The Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio spoke at our annual Coffee and Conservation event, held this year at the Art at the Pavilion tent. The Festival's featured artist Nancy Tankersley received many accolades during this event. Her work featured working watermen and there was a great deal of discussion about the connection between productive fisheries and wild life habitat. DNR was also a sponsor.

Ms. Vanhooser also collaborated with the Waterfowl Festival to facilitate a press tour during this year's event. Five journalists participated in a tour that took them around the county, while also allowing time to see the festival. We are hopeful that this will yield a number of great stories about Talbot County. The goal was to get good coverage for the 50th anniversary of Waterfowl. Ms. Vanhooser feels the department and the festival will see a good return on investment. Ms. Vanhooser, Mr. Shoge, and Economic Development Commission Vice Chairman Reza Jafari are working with Waterfowl Festival Executive Director Margaret Enloe on an economic impact report.

Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe: LSG Landscape Architects have been hired to create the Master Plan and the Interpretive Plan for the park. This process is well underway, with the first community meeting taking place on November 2. The crowd is small, but engaged. Ms. Vanhooser noted that the group is looking for ways to involve Talbot Mentors and Building African American Minds (BAAM). We want to hear what younger people have to say about what should happen at the park.

The National Park Service has also agreed to provide technical assistance to the Maryland Park Service to explore building a Frederick Douglass Rail Trail, which will connect Easton to the Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe and possibly Tuckahoe State Park. At this point, a rail trail is just an idea that is being explored. The Frederick Douglass Rail Trail has been discussed as part of the Cordova Master Plan and will likely be included in that document.

IV. New Business

Travel Guide: Ms. Vanhooser reported that we will be reaching out to people soon to verify their listings. The County Manager's Office has advised that the County's procurement rules require us to go out to bid this year. The RFP is ready and will be going over to the County Manager's office today.

V. Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.

VI. Adjournment: The group dispersed at 9:32 a.m. The next meeting will be held on December 11 at 8:30 a.m.